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MR CHIVERS: I think librarians can not expect publishers to give them better paper when they consider that 90% or more of their clients are satisfied with the paper supplied. I feel quite sure, however, that the publishers are in the dark about the mechanical qualities of such a paper as I have been discussing, and I think objections have been made about publishers' bindings which have not at all times been altogether reasonable. Perhaps dealing with the matter as I suggest may have no immediate effect, but I think it will have a tendency to bring about gradually a better state of affairs. I would hold myself ready to send the results of the mechanical tests I have made, if I found it incumbent upon me to return any books discovered to be unsuitable for strong binding because of the worthlessness of their papers.

THE PRESIDENT: You know, ladies and gentlemen, that juvenile artists sometimes label the product of their brush or pencil, "This is the picture of a man," "This is a tree," "This is a picture of a fox catching a goose. You can't see the fox, because he is behind the hay-stack." Similarly, I might characterize and label the general sessions of this conference, in the final act of which we are now engaged. After the opening session, our first general session dealt with questions which were primarily of interest to librarians. The next broadened a little and included questions of interest to educators, as well. This last session is of still wider scope, and when the Program committee got through arranging for it, I think they felt a good deal as Terence must have felt when he wrote the famous words, "I am a man. I consider nothing that is human foreign to me." And, since this session

has such broad scope, we deem ourselves singularly fortunate that we have been able to assign the place of honor in the program to a gentleman who is perhaps as human, as humane and as genial as any of the distinguished authors or speakers in this country. It would be little less than presumption on my part if I were to attempt to introduce to the "gentle readers" before me the reverend Dr S. M. Crothers. You all know his works and delight in them. Many of you have his personal acquaintance, and I shall not further intervene between you and the treat that he has in store for you. I beg Dr Crothers to be so kind as to address you.

Dr Crothers's address entitled, **A FAIRY STORY FOR LIBRARIANS** will be published in the "Atlantic Monthly" for December 1909, under the title, "The convention of books."

THE PRESIDENT: I am sure we would all like an encore.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is simply nothing to be said after such a delightful paper as we have heard except to express unbounded thanks to Dr Crothers for the very great pleasure that he has given us. You will appreciate the weight of the obligation we are under to him for coming here, when I tell you that he will be obliged to sit up nearly all night as a return for giving us this delight. We thank him most heartily for the paper that he has read us and for subjecting himself to much inconvenience on our behalf.

We are to have a variety of interests before us today. The next paper will come into fine contrast with the one that we have just heard.

Will MR E. F. STEVENS, of Pratt Institute read us his paper on

THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF TECHNICAL LITERATURE

Technical books, and the very idea of them, are foreign to a region of summer hotels and mountain scenery. There is nothing in this landscape that suggests the literature of machines. Yet at a library convention, however serene the environment, it still remains proper to mention

books, even, it appears, the sort of books which bring to mind only the brutally unpicturesque mechanisms responsible for the disquiet of the towns from which we have just hastened our escape. Though the topic is permissible here, yet a review of some criteria in technical book selection before library people released from every phase of work, can easily afford to be brief.

It is interesting to observe that industrial literature has now found general, not to say universal, acceptance with the public library. It has ceased to be a matter of discussion among librarians whether or not technical books are worth having. Our very lively concern has now become, how to discriminate in getting that which we plainly ought to have to satisfy the wants of the people. We have always supposed this question to be a formidable one, and so it is, in the abstract. There is no royal road to easy conclusions about technical books; the way must be followed with constant caution, and yet not without confidence in the existing signs that point the direction. Happily, too, a close encounter with anticipated hardships dismisses many preconceived terrors.

It may, then, be hopefully attempted to show that technical bookbuying can become a reasonably simple matter for the library of limited size and resources, the type of library which may be supposed to be chiefly interested in the considerations of this paper. And it may be shown, it's not too venturesome to say, with greater assurance than to undertake to establish any approved line of action with the eternal problem of fiction selection, which, now dormant in annual convention, ever threatens in daily experience.

The general nature of the technical books to be added to a particular library must be fixed by the individual librarian, the conditions of the immediate locality within and without the library helping to determine the character of the books best suited to it. Then, satisfied as to what kind of books to get, the next point to arrive at is what books of that kind are to be had. Of course, if the library undertakes to specialize so far as to main-

tain a technical department, the head of that department should be competent to make, or assist in making, all necessary decisions. He who follows the subject closely and properly ought to know, though a confidential inquiry among technical librarians themselves as to the best means of arriving at their own conclusions would be extremely advantageous in the work of specializing.

But it is with the lesser library, the average library in an average American town, that the question does assume an aspect of real difficulty. For these there already exist certain criteria for technical book selection which give evidence of right intentions that promise better fulfillment as higher requirements are insisted upon.

As a groundwork selection, the most ambitious effort is the "Descriptive list of technical books" prepared by a committee of the Society for the promotion of engineering education. It will better realize its intended purpose when it more closely approaches its own characterization on the title page as a "Descriptive list . . . classified by subjects . . . suitable for public, industrial and school libraries." To do this adequately it must greatly broaden its scope and vastly enrich its annotations. At the seventeenth annual meeting of the Society, held in New York last week, the third, 1909, edition, revised, was presented as a report of the Committee, and in the discussion which followed it was the writer's privilege to be the chance advocate of the public library, and to endeavor to show wherein the list fell short of your requirements. He was sustained in his advocacy by expressions of interest and kind suggestions from a number of librarians with whom he had previously communicated.

If this list becomes sufficiently comprehensive to meet our not unreasonable expectations of it, we ought in future to look there for a fundamental guide to technical book selection of almost final authority. Should the demands which librarians are disposed to make seem to impose too heavily upon the good nature of a body of extremely busy men, it might be expected that the kindred Society for the

promotion of industrial education would become interested to share the work. They would naturally take over the literature of the mechanics trades—the “practical books for practical men”—leaving strictly engineering matters for the engineering society. Then we should have two companion authorities, “Engineering books” and “Industrial books,” and if the lists should overlap at points where distinctions would be hard to draw, double endorsement would be only doubly convincing. This possible co-operation was offered as a suggestion from the public library interests at the meeting of last week just referred to. No action, however, was taken upon it.

It is regrettable that the report as presented gave evidence of haste in preparation and of a disposition to compromise with the requirements of a task that had clearly grown beyond expectations. The final action of the Society in referring it back to the Committee for further revision will advantageously delay the publication of the list, but as to the nature and extent of the desired revision no instructions were given that would encourage us to expect our ideal in the outcome.

The writer is disappointed to find that his hope that he should today be the bearer of the glad news to librarians that a supreme product of master minds was now to reward their long expectancy, is premature.

There are many other bibliographies of real value that have appeared from time to time, of a kind that deserve to be recognized as dependable criteria. Certain periodicals of standing have at times, though too rarely, prepared lists of recommended books. Of these there may be noted in passing:

“A \$500 technical library” in “Technical literature,” now “Engineering digest,” June, 1907; a “Select bibliography of technical chemistry” in “Chemical engineer,” December, 1908; a “Review of the literature of reinforced concrete,” reprinted from “Engineering digest,” by the “Engineering news,” with added list of current books on cement, concrete, lime, etc., just received. Other lists of this character are

promised by the editor of “Engineering digest” for early publication.

Then, perhaps, still more to the point because more general, and sympathetic, too, are the little bibliographies issued by libraries making special effort in technical lines. Of such there have recently come under my notice: “Some industrial arts books of popular use in the public library of St Joseph, Mo.” It was printed in the “A. L. A. Booklist,” February, 1908, with those titles starred which had been in greatest demand by readers; “List of practical books on electricity, machine-shop practice, foundry practice, etc.,” Louisville free public library, 1909; and very similar to it, the “List of practical books on machine-shop practice, foundry work and electricity,” published by the Library association of Portland (Ore.), 1909.

These and others like them are widely distributed, and are always to be had upon application to the libraries which put them out.

It is quite outside the purpose of this paper to review the bibliography of technical literature though the value of such a presentation is apparent; but bibliographies if not too broad are a certain kind of criteria, and anyone starting a technical library would be fortunate to have at hand the portions of the “Classified catalog of the Carnegie library of Pittsburgh,” which relate to useful arts, the John Crerar library “List of books on industrial arts,” and Greenwood’s “Classified guide to technical and commercial books.” These greater catalogs, however, are apt to bewilder and discourage the beginners in this field.

By getting together a few of the briefer and more limited lists the intending library buyer may readily establish an acceptable nucleus. If the purchasing must be restricted to a very few books in each department and a librarian feels any hesitancy in making final choice from printed lists, it would be a very agreeable matter to submit titles to technical patrons of the library to check up. Miss Frances Rathbone of the East Orange public library works it out in that way on frequent occasions, she tells me, as doubtless others

do. Another way would be to get the librarian of the nearest technical library to do the checking up. It would doubtless gratify him to be asked. And so by simple and obvious, yet effective, though unfortunately not systematic, methods the foundation may be sufficiently well put down, and a technical library started upon it.

Growth may now begin by first adding more copies of those books shown to be most in demand and those known to be standard, not forgetting that a library for ordinary purposes, having a few of the best books in each department of technology, and these judiciously duplicated, is better off than one having many different titles on a given subject representing one each of all kinds of books.

Then follows the lookout for current purchasing of (a) new editions of the reliables, (b) new books to supplement or even to supplant them, and (c) wholly new books on new subjects. With the buying of new books the most serious elements of trouble are encountered, but here, too, there are ways of minimizing them.

It is assumed, of course, that the librarians in this situation do not have the opportunity to follow reviews in technical journals. That being the case, it might be expected that those who do take time for such investigation and who in other ways labor to discover and discriminate, bear in mind not one but many libraries in behalf of centralized and co-operative effort.

At this point we must look to the annotated monthly or quarterly lists issued by the larger libraries conducting specialized departments. The appearance of the "Monthly bulletin" of the Carnegie library of Pittsburgh we all greet with especial interest. A year ago the Pratt Institute free library began to incorporate descriptive notes of technical books in its Bulletin. These annotations are designed as much to be of service to other libraries as to its own constituency. The fact that libraries of this kind buy out of all proportion to the common need is really an advantage to the small buyer, because long lists, if rightly descriptive, give an exten-

sive range of choice to those who have to pick carefully.

Here again the public may be taken into confidence. Men who are engaged in teaching or following engineering branches will often be glad to indicate what books they would naturally like to possess, being pleased to act as technical censors if only to induce the librarian to make available for their use what they would otherwise have to buy for themselves. But, after all, the librarian is happiest who can say to these specially informed patrons when they volunteer the recommendation of a certain book, "Oh, yes, indeed, we added that a month ago."

Unquestionably it is some regular and systematic procedure that is the greatest present need for library guidance. Hit-or-miss methods and makeshifts, though surprisingly efficacious when nothing else offers, cannot always answer; nor can help from without, whether of learned society or expert individual, be the ultimate reliance of librarians in a concern so peculiarly a library affair. If there is a good reason why one library should buy a given book why should not other libraries know the reason without the necessity of finding it out for themselves every time?

With some such thought the Pratt Institute free library ventured this spring to publish its "Technical books of 1908, a selection." This attempt was designed to supplement existing criteria by bringing together those books of a single year which had particularly justified themselves under the observation of the Applied science department. It is but an experiment, and a possible initial contribution to a movement in the direction of centralizing technical book recommendation for libraries in America. The responsibility is great, and should be assumed only by the most responsible. It would seem, then, to belong to the American Library Association to establish one day a censorship over books on a scale that will enable the buyer of technical literature everywhere to select intelligently and quickly, with the confident assurance of an authoritative official endorsement. Then there will be one

criterion and the librarian shall be content not to question it.

THE PRESIDENT: The next item on the program is a symposium on "Recent books for boys." Mr Bostwick has kindly consented to take charge of this symposium, and to him we are indebted for preparing it in its present very attractive form. Will Mr Bostwick add to his kindness by taking the chair?

SYMPOSIUM ON RECENT BOOKS FOR BOYS

CHAIRMAN BOSTWICK: In this world of ours nothing is at a standstill. Everything moves. And to get a comprehensive view of anything we must not simply look at it as it is now, but must trace its progress and its alterations from year to year, and explain, if we can, the causes of change. We shall not know zoölogy thoroughly, for instance, if we understand all about lions, elephants and whales as they are now; we must know about their ancestry. As we look at a geological chart portraying graphically the rise, progress and decay of various forms of animal life we are struck with the fact that some one form is always predominant, though many others exist, some of which are increasing and others decreasing in importance. This is true not only of the forms of life in geologic time, but also of so many other things that it may almost be set down as a general law of existence.

Conditions change gradually; they become more favorable to one thing and less so to another, so that the former increases in quantity and improves in quality, while the latter lessens and deteriorates. Take, for instance, the vogue of games and sports. At one period cycling is in the ascendant, at another tennis, at still another roller-skating, while all three exist together at all times, in various degrees of popularity. This law applies also to the reading of boys. The stories that are written for them have generally some leading motive—war, athletics, camping, the sea, mystery, and so on; and the popularity of these various types has altered from year to year. I think most of us can re-

member, for instance, a time when the athletic type of boy's story, now so popular, and well represented by the books of Ralph Barbour, was almost non-existent. It is a development of the school type, which is very old. One of the best, of course, was, is, and always will be "Tom Brown," and we had many such books as De Mille's B. O. W. C series, Clarence Gordon's books, written under the pen name of Vieux Moustache, etc.

It was most natural, of course, that school life, which is important and so distinctive a part of a boy's career, should be taken up as a background for tales of boy life by writers. What is interesting for us to note here is that, as athletics has become a more important part of school and college life, it has also become more and more prominent in the school and college stories, so that we now have a distinct athletic type of story. The story, in other words, has responded to a change in environment. Those who object to the present part played by athletics in the life of educational institutions, will doubtless deplore also the rise in popularity of the baseball and football tale. To those who, like myself, regard it as a healthful development, the appearance of athletics as the theme of stories is commendable and interesting in itself as well as a striking illustration of the fact that the predominant theme in juvenile literature is a reflection of something that is, for the moment, in the air. Thus the period of the Civil War and immediately after it, was at the same time that of the predominant war story. Later came the success story, typified by Alger's poor city boys who stop the runaway horse and straightway marry the rich man's daughter. And the heyday of the wild west tale—Ellis and Castlemon—was coeval with the most rapid extension of our far western frontier.

This correspondence between what is going on in the world and the themes of fiction is noticeable, of course, in adult literature also. We have socialistic novels now, and muck-raking tales, where such things were unheard of even 10 years ago; but the phenomenon is more marked